

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

INRE-00 IO-13 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8749

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN

WASHDC 892

DIA WASQHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4772

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: ASAD MAKES MAJOR SPEECH CONCERNING LEBANON AND HINTS
THAT AMERICAN DIMPLMATIC INITIATIVE TO SOLVE LEBANESE
CRISIS WOULD BE WELCOMED BY DAMASCUS

1. PRES. ASAD DELIVERED THREE-HOUR SPEECH
EVENING JULY 21 TO MEMBERS OF SYRIAN PROVINCIAL COUNCILS
AND BAATH PARTY LEADERSHIP DETAILING HISTORY OF SYRIAN
EFFORTS TO RESOLVE LEBANESE CRISIS. ASAD ADMITTED THAT
HE SHOULD HAVE SPOKEN OUT EARLIER TO DISPEL CONFUSION
SURROUNDING THIS ISSUE. OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS SHOUS FOLLOWING
HIGHLIGHTS OF SPEECH AS CARRIED FBIS. (LOCAL PRESS STILL
STRUGGLING TO COPE WITH GARGANTUAN TEXT AND NOT DELIVERED
AS OF 1300L).

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A. UNITED STATES

ASAD ONCE AGAIN CITED U.S. OFFER TO PRESS ISRAEL TO WITHDRAW FROM PORTION OF GOLAN HEIGHTS, WHICH ASAD SAID HE REFUSED FOR SAKE OF AIDING PALESTINIAN CAUSE. HE THEN SUMMARIZED TWO DIPLMATIC EXCHANGES BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND DAMASCUS. FIRST MESSAGE DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR WARNED THAT ISRAEL MIGHT REACT MILITARILY TO INJECTION OF SYRIAN FORCES INTO LEBANON DESPITE U.S. PRESSURE ON ISRAEL. ASAD THEN NOTED, "THIS MEANS THAT THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON, ESPECIALLY ARMED INTERVENTION." SECOND MESSAGE WARNED THAT USG HAD BEEN INFORMED BY ISRAEL THAT LATTER MIGHT REACT IF SYRIA WENT BEYOND CERTAIN POINT IN LEBANON. DESCRIBING HIS REPLY, ASAD SAID, "SYRIAN FEELS CONTENTS OF THE MESSAGE CONSTITUTE AN ULTIMATUM. IT CATEGORICALLY REJECTS THIS ULTIMATUM. SECOND, SYRIA IS NOT READY NOW, AND WILL NOT BE READY IN THE FUTURE, TO ACCEPT ANY ULTIMATUM FROM ANY QUARTER IN THE WORKD." IN ANOTHER PORTION OF SPEECH ASAD PAID COMPLIMENT TO AMB. DEAN BROWN'S MISSION BY NOTING THAT FIGHTING HAD ABATED FOLLOWING HIS VISIT. SIGNIFICANTLY, HE THEN ADDED THAT SYRIA DID NOT OBJECT TO OUTSIDE ENDEAVORS AIMED AT STOPPING FIGHTING, "EVEN IF THEY COME FROM AMERICA."

B. SOVIET UNION.

ASAD MADE NO RPT NO REFERENCE DURING ENTIRE THREE HOURS TO SOVIET UNION.

C. LEBANON.

ASAD CLAIMED THAT MILITARY CONCLUSION TO CRISIS RULED OUT. HE ACCUSED ISRAEL OF SEEKING CREATION OF SECTARIAN MINI-STATES IN REGION. HE PLEDGED THAT SYRIAN POSITION TOWARD LEBANON WAS "STEADY, PRINCIPLED AND UNCHANGING." HE ASSERTED THAT SYRIAN READY TO WITHDRAW AT REQUEST OF LEBANESE PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER, SPEAKER
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OF PARLIMENT OR "ANY ORDINARY LEBANESE CITIZEN" ; BUT PALESTINIANS HAD NO RIGHT TO ASK SYRIAN TO WITHDRAW. HE DESCRIBED FRANGIE AS MAN WHO ALWAYS KEPT HIS WORD. HE REVEALED THAT IN HIS LAST MEETING WITHJUMBLATT SOME MONTHS BACK, PSP LEADERS SAID ABOUT CHRISTINAS: "THEY HAVE BEEN RULING US FOR 140 YEARS; LET'S GET RID OF THEM." ASAD COMMENTED THAT HE REFUSED TO ASSOCIATE SYRIA WITH POLICY MOTIVATED BY SECTARIAN REVENGE IN LEBANON.

D. PALESTINIANS.

ASAD REFERRED NUMBER OF TIMES TO ARAFAT BUT DID NOT DIRECT PERSONAL ACCUSATIONS AGAINST PLO LEADER. ASAD PLEDGED LOYALTY TO PALESTINIAN CAUSE, BUT ASKED RHETORICALLY WHETHER SOME PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS HAD NOT LOST SIGHT OF PRINCIPLE OF LIBERATING PALESTINIAN TERRITORY; HOW DID PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN MOUNT LEBANON SERVED CAUSE OF BATTLE AGAINST ENEMY. HE READ FROM DAMASCUS AGREEMENT BETWEEN SYRIANS AND PLO, AND CHARGED THAT PALESTINIANS HAD NOT IMPLEMENTED POINTS OF AGREEMENT. HE SAID THAT LEBANESE HAD AGREED TO PALESTINIAN DEMANDS THAT WERE UNRELATED TO STRUGGLE WITH ISREAL AND ADDED: "IS ALL THIS NECESSARY FOR THE RESISTANCE TO CARRY OUT ITS ACTIVITIES AGAINST ISRAEL? I SAY NO."

2. COMMENT: AS ASAD ADMITTED TO HIS AUDIENCE, DETAILED EXPLANATION OF LEBANESE PLICY HE HAS BEEN PURSUING LONG OVERDUE. ASAD STUCK GENERALLY TO HIGH GROUND BUT SHARPLY SCORED CONDUCT OF ARAFAT AND JUMBLATT IN LEBANON.

3. LACK OF ANY MENTION OF SOVIET UNION STRIKING. HOWEVER, MANY DAMASCENES WILL QUICKLY CONNECT ASAD'S STATED REFUSAL TO ACCEPT ANY ULTIMATUM "FROM ANY QUARTER IN THE WORKD" WITH MOSCOW AS WELL AS WITH WASHINGTON, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT WIDESPREAD RUMORS OF NEW STRAINS IN SYRO-SOVIET RELATIONS. BALANCED REFERENCES TO U.S., BOTH COMPLIMENTARY AND CRITICAL, AT LEAST LEAVE AUDIENCE WITH IMPRESSION THAT U.S. ACTIVE IN TRYING TO DEAL WITH CRISIS.

4. ASAD HAS NOW SIGNALLED THAT SYRIA IN LEBANON FOR THE
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DURATION, UNTIL SETTLEMENT REACHED, AND HAS PUBLICLY PROVIDED LEBANESE WITH CONDITIONS FOR ENDING SYRIAN INTERVENTION. SPEECH ATTEMPTS PUT HIS ADVERSARIES IN LEBANON ON DEFENSIVE AND MAY WIN HIM SOME SYRIAN CONVERTS AS WELL.
MURPHY

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